

HOLY FAMILY CHURCH



MAIN ALTAR AND SANCTUARY

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The Historic HOLY FAMILY (JESUIT) CHURCH, 1080 West Roosevelt Road

Holy Family Parish, in charge of the Jesuit Fathers, was begun on May 4, 1857 when the Rev. Arnold Damen, S. J. arrived in Chicago. The first church was opened on July 12, 1857 on 11th St. just east of May St. The corner stone of the present Gothic church was laid on Aug. 23, 1857 and was the first Catholic Church in Chicago built west of Halsted St. In the Autumn of 1857 the first of the six Holy Family Parish schools, and the first school, either parochial or public, west of Halsted St., was opened in two wings of the frame church on 11th St. The six schools within the present parish limits were; Holy Family (Brothers School), 1865; Sacred Heart Convent School, 1866; St. Aloysius, 1867; Guardian Angel, 1875; St. Joseph, 1877 and St. Agnes, 1877. The new Gothic church was solemnly dedicated on Aug. 26, 1860 with thirteen Bishops attending the ceremony. The tower of the church, height 246 ft., was completed in 1874. At the time it was built the church was considered the third largest church in the United States. It has a seating capacity of 1500. The pews installed the year of the dedication are still in use. The stained glass windows of Munich origin were installed in 1907. In 1873 were erected the Stations of the Cross which were imported from Europe. Sixty-three statues adorn the church. Seven lights have been burning continuously on the altar of the Perpetual Help in fulfillment of the vow made by Father Damen in thanksgiving for the protection of the Gothic church during the Chicago Fire of 1871. The picture of our Mother of Perpetual Help, an exact copy of the famous picture in Rome, was made by a Dutch painter in England. The paintings on the Jesuit Martyrs altar in the west transept were also painted in Europe. The lower church, once necessary to satisfy the spiritual needs of the many thousands of families living within the parish limits, was converted in January, 1940 into a parish hall and called Damen Hall. Over 55,000 persons have received the Sacrament of Baptism in this historic church.

Main Altar and Sanctuary

The Main Altar of Holy Family Church is of Gothic style corresponding to the architecture of the church. It is made of wood and is 52 ft. high from the floor of the sanctuary and 30 ft. from wall to wall. The altar table is nine feet long and 23 inches deep. On each side of the lower part of the altar is a group of life-size statues representing the Doctors of the Church; on the west side, St. Basil the Great, St. Ambrose and St. Jerome; on the east side, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Gregory and St. John Chrysostom. Above these groups stand the statues of St. Zachery and St. Elizabeth. Statues of St. Joachim and St. Anne stand beside the picture of the Holy Family. Three statues at the top of the altar represent Faith, Hope and Charity. Just above the tabernacle is a small statue of the Good Shepherd and another of Christ breaking bread. Six angels stand beside the tabernacle and the Benediction throne. These thirteen statues are all wood-carved. A wood-carved reproduction of Da Vinci's Last Supper extends the full length of the altar table. The picture of the Holy Family, a copy of Murillo's masterpiece and painted by a Jesuit lay-brother in Belgium, occupies the upper central part of the altar. Four wooden Reliquary cases containing many relics of the Saints stand on both sides of the tabernacle. Eleven steps lead up to the altar from the floor of the church. The statues of the two altar-boys high on the side walls recall a famous incident in the life of Father Damen. On the west pillar inside the sanctuary are the statues of St. Ignatius Loyola, S. J. and St. Peter Canisius, S. J. and on the east pillar, the statues of Bl. Peter Faber, S. J. and St. Patrick. The Communion rail, a masterpiece of wood carving, extends the full width of the main altar and the two side altars. Of the seventeen panels or sections of this Communion rail only two are repeated in design. The carvings on the main altar are the work of Anthony Buscher, a former parishioner and his nephew, Sebastian Buscher from Germany. Louis Wisner, also living in the parish at the time, carved the Communion rail.